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Gilbert Fights Back Against Great Lakes Polluters

LANSING—Penalties for polluting Michigan’s waters will increase, state Sen. Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac) announced today after the passage of Senate Bill 46. Gilbert, a co-sponsor of the bill, also succeeded in adding an amendment strengthening the legislation.

The amendment, designed to address future incidents similar to the vinyl chloride spill in the St. Clair River during the August power blackout, includes under the penalties a responsible party who fails to report a chemical spill in a timely manner.

“The Great Lakes are a valuable resource and need to be protected,” said Gilbert. “These fines will hold polluters accountable for their actions and make them pay for deliberately or negligently destroying our waters.”

The bill will increase civil and criminal fines and add a new violation for “catastrophic discharges” into the state’s waters. This is defined as any spilling, leaking, pumping, pouring, emitting, emptying, releasing, injecting, escaping, leaching, dumping or disposing of a substance into the waters of the state that causes or may cause a serious resource impairment or a serious impairment to the public’s health, safety or welfare.

The bill provides a civil fine of not less than \$50,000 per violation for each day the violation occurs.

In other environmental developments, a legislative package regarding solid waste restrictions was approved by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. It is expected to be ready for Senate passage as early as Thursday, Oct. 9.

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Comments from Sen. Gilbert on the pollution penalties are available for download on the Senate Majority Audiowire at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop or by calling the radio hotline at 517-373-4000.